

The Nation

Long-Submerged Experts On China Score Bullseye

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WHEN COMMUNIST China raised a menacing voice in the recent Indo-Pakistani crisis, there were two key reactions in Washington.

• In order to decide what, if any, preparatory military moves the United States should make, the Pentagon asked for a "National Estimate" on what China would do. The unanimous verdict of the United States Intelligence Board was that the Chinese would confine military action, if any, to border forays. And so no precautionary steps were taken.

• The acknowledged No. 1 China expert in the Government predicted, after reading the Indian reply to the first Chinese three-day ultimatum, that Peking would extend it rather than take military action. And so the United States did not comment on the ultimatum.

The Intelligence Board, composed of the top men in civilian and military intelligence, and the top China expert, Allen S. Whiting, head of the State Department's Office of Research and Analysis for the Far East, both turned out to be right.

The China watchers, in short, looked good. It was an exhilarating moment for a long-submerged element in the American Government. Perhaps it may even represent a turning point for the current version of what once was a lively "China service," a group long ago decimated in the wake of the "Who lost China?" controversy and the miasma of McCarthyism.

Lack of Status

TODAY, THE CHINA watchers still lack the status of the Sovietologists. The career peak for State Department men who estimate the goings-on in the Kremlin is the American ambassadorship in Moscow. Charles (Chip) Bohlen and Llewelyn Thompson made it there and Foy Kohler is there now. George Kennan, who also made it, is at least akin to this group. Averell Harriman might be added because he, too, has

had great influence on attitudes toward the Soviet Union, and also was ambassador there. However, he and Kennan are not careerists.

For the careerists, the unhappy fact is that there is no American embassy in Peking. Indeed, official American usage is to call that city Peiping, the non-capital version of its name in keeping with the diplomatic fiction that Chang Kai-shek's government on Taiwan is the only lawful government of "China."

Furthermore, none of the China careerists has direct access to President Johnson as does Thompson on Soviet affairs. Whiting has never been called in, although he was by President Kennedy. Normal channels are followed far more now than in the Kennedy era.

This is not to say that one finds any sense of resentment among those who live with the China problem. It is to say, however, that China expertise seems to reach the top more by a process of osmosis than through direct contact.

The summit of decision is the President himself. The closest thing to a single critical point of influence is his weekly luncheon meetings with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, his foreign policy aide.

The Specialists

THE "BUNDY SHOP," as it is known, contains specialists on an area basis. The Asia man is Chester Cooper, who served with the United States Army in China at the end of World War II. Under Cooper as a China specialist is Mandarin-speaking, 34-year-old James C. Thomson Jr. His parents were missionaries in China.

This Thomson-Cooper-Bundy route provides one channel to the President constantly used by Whiting and his assistants, including his deputy, James Leonard Jr., 45, who is one of those rare birds who speaks both Mandarin and Russian. Whiting himself, about to turn 39, brought a rich academic background to government.

Whiting, precise and quickly-to-the-point, speaks and reads Mandarin. But the Communists swallowed the mainland before he could get there. Prematurely gray, he cracks that his hair has turned in the waiting, a play on Red Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi's recent remark that "my hair has turned gray in waiting" for the United States to invade China.

Secretary Rusk served in Korean War days as Assistant Secretary for the Far East. But he seems to be less influenced by that fact than by his World War II service as an Army colonel in the China-Burma-India theater.

Another Bundy

RUSK'S ASSISTANT for the Far East is William P. Bundy, McGeorge Bundy's elder brother, who is a former CIA official. He went to State from the Pentagon, where he was Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, a post that his colleagues say greatly colors his current thinking. His preoccupation, like Cooper's, is with the war in Vietnam and, like Rusk, he does not pretend to be a China expert. The director of his office of Asian Communist Affairs is 55-year-old Harald W. Jacobson. Mandarin-speaking Jacobson once served as naval attache in China and later as the American consul general in Hong Kong.

High civilian officials at the Pentagon say they depend on State and CIA for their China expertise. There is considerable cross-ruffing, in fact. For example, the China man on State's Policy Planning Staff is Joseph Yaeger, 49. An economist, he served in China with the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, the last year of the war and has been living with China problems for nearly 25 years, including a term as No. 2 man in the embassy in Taiwan.

At the CIA, by coincidence, the chief of intelligence, Ray Cline, is an old China hand of the Taiwan variety. However, his responsibility is